



Congress debates rebuke of Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene

By ALAN FRAM, BRIAN SLO-DYSKO and KEVIN FREKING
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress was debating Thursday whether to strip far-right Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of her committee assignments over past comments Greene made that were racist, embraced conspiracy theories or endorsed violence directed at Democratic officeholders.

A Democratic measure removing Greene from her posts was all but certain to pass after it was brought to the House floor for a vote, forcing Republicans to go on the record either supporting or rebuking Greene.

Rather than defending Greene's remarks, Repub-

licans complained bitterly about the precedent that the Democratic effort would set by meddling in the affairs of a rival party. "Never before in the history of this House has the majority abused its power in this way," lamented House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., who also condemned Greene's comments and said they "do not represent the views of my party."

"You'll regret this, and you may regret this sooner than you think," he added. Earlier, Greene said during a floor speech that she regrets some "words of the past," but she did not explicitly apologize for her racist and violent rhetoric.

Continued on next page



Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., goes back to her office after speaking on the floor of the House Chamber on Capitol Hill in Washington, Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021.

Associated Press



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An LED billboard calling for the resignation of Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., is seen on Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2021, in Dalton, Ga. Associated Press

Continued from Front

Alternating between contrition and defiance, the newly elected Georgia Republican asserted that she was "a very regular American" who posted conspiracy theories from QAnon and other sources before she began campaigning for Congress, but said those views did not represent her own.

She also looked to shift blame while falsely equating her own endorsement of violence against Democrats with those in the party who supported racial justice protests over the summer, which sometimes turned violent.

She pronounced the media "just as guilty as QAnon of presenting truth and lies." QAnon's core theory embraces the lie that Democrats are tied to a global sex trafficking ring that also involves Satanism and cannibalism.

Democrats were expected to move forward later Thursday with the vote to remove her from her committee posts.

House Rules Committee

Chairman Jim McGovern noted that while Greene expressed regret over her remarks and claimed to have had an epiphany that QAnon was false in 2018, many of her comments, including those endorsing violence against House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, were more recent.

"I did not hear an apology or denouncement for the insinuation that political opponents should be violently dealt with," said McGovern, a Massachusetts Democrat. "It's not ancient history. She continues to fund-raise off this stuff."

The vote will force Greene's Republican colleagues to go on the record to defend or rebuke her after she has drawn bipartisan condemnation over her past remarks. The political dilemma for Republicans underscores the tension that has riven the party over its future since Donald Trump lost the White House.

Democrats gave Republicans an ultimatum this week: Strip Greene of her committee assignments, or they would. Bipartisan pressure built after Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., called Greene's "loony lies" a "cancer" for the party.

But McCarthy ruled out taking action. Instead, he accused Democrats of a "partisan power grab" for targeting Greene.

Pelosi told reporters Thursday that she was "pro-

foundly concerned" by Republicans' "acceptance of an extreme conspiracy theorist."

"If any of our members threatened the safety of other members, we'd be the first ones to take them off a committee," Pelosi, D-Calif., said hours before the planned vote.

A few Republicans probably will side with Democrats and many have denounced Greene's past remarks. But some warn that the Democratic majority is setting a bad precedent by meddling with Greene's committee assignments, a process that the parties have long controlled.

McCarthy's decision to back Greene comes when the GOP has been ideologically adrift after Trump's loss, struggling over whether to embrace his norm-busting divisiveness or the party's more traditional, policy-oriented conservative values.

House Republicans blocked an effort Wednesday by conservative hardliners to oust their No. 3 leader, Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo. The daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney had enraged Trump supporters by voting to impeach him over the riot at the U.S. Capitol.

In sticking by both women, McCarthy was attempting to placate both traditional conservatives and populists, like Greene, who emulate Trump. The moves

were typical of McCarthy's preference to avoid ruffling feathers as he charts his hoped-for path to becoming House speaker some day.

Greene has made a wide range of racist remarks, while breathing life into conspiracy theories. Many of them were online and recently deleted after the liberal group Media Matters unearthed them.

Greene once said Black people "are held slaves to the Democratic Party" and suggested that the Parkland, Florida, school shooting was staged to disguise the perpetrators — a so-called false flag operation. She was seen in an online video harassing Parkland survivor David Hogg at the U.S. Capitol, accusing him of "trying to take away my Second Amendment rights."

"He has nothing to say because he's paid to do this," Greene said after Hogg ignored her. "He's a coward. He can't say one word."

She made similar remarks after a gunman opened fire from a Las Vegas hotel room in 2017, killing 58 people at an outdoor music festival, which she suggested was a secret plot to build support for gun control legislation.

"I don't believe (gunman Stephen Paddock) pulled this off all by himself, and I know most of you don't either," Greene said in a video. "What's the best way

to control the people? You have to take away their guns."

In 2018, she speculated in a Facebook post that a Jewish-owned financial firm may have been involved in a plot to spark California wildfires. She suggested the motive could have been to fast-track a high-speed rail project favored by then-Gov. Jerry Brown, using "lasers or blue beams of light" fired from space.

"There are too many coincidences to ignore," she wrote.

Greene once called Pelosi a "traitor" who was guilty of "treason," a "crime punishable by death." She also "liked" a Facebook post where a commenter called for "a bullet to the head" of Pelosi.

The conspiracy theories Greene has embraced came up during the closed Republican caucus meeting Wednesday. Some said Greene apologized to her colleagues, though there were conflicting, vague versions of exactly what she'd said.

That's at odds with recent statements Greene has made on Twitter, where she has vowed to never back down or apologize and labeled her critics traitors, while using the Democratic push to punish her to raise money for her campaign.

McCarthy condemned Greene's past endorsements of conspiracy theories — after weeks of saying little critical of her — and said the first-term congresswoman had recognized in a private conversation that she must meet "a higher standard" as a lawmaker. It's unusual for party leaders to strip lawmakers of committee assignments, which can help them address their districts' needs, raise campaign contributions and shape legislation.

In 2019, House GOP leaders removed Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, who had a history of racist comments, from the Agriculture and Judiciary panels after he was quoted as wondering when "white supremacist" became an offensive term. He lost the Republican primary for his seat in 2020 and is out of Congress after serving nine terms. □



Voting company sues Fox, Giuliani over election fraud claims

By JOSHUA GOODMAN

MIAMI (AP) — A voting technology company is suing Fox News, three of its hosts and two former lawyers for former President Donald Trump — Rudy Giuliani and Sidney Powell — for \$2.7 billion, charging that the defendants conspired to spread false claims that the company helped "steal" the U.S. presidential election.

The 285-page complaint filed Thursday in New York state court by Florida-based Smartmatic USA is one of the largest libel suits ever undertaken. On Jan. 25, a rival election-technology company — Dominion Voting Systems, which was also ensnared in Trump's baseless effort to overturn the election — sued Giuliani and Powell for \$1.3 billion.

Unlike Dominion, whose technology was used in 24 states, Smartmatic's participation in the 2020 election was restricted to Los Angeles County, which votes heavily Democratic. Smartmatic's limited role notwithstanding, Fox aired at least 13 reports falsely stating or implying the company had stolen the 2020 vote in cahoots with Venezuela's socialist government, according to the complaint. This alleged "disinformation campaign" continued even after then-Attorney General William Barr said the Department of Justice could find no evidence of widespread voter



Rudy Giuliani, a personal attorney for President Donald Trump, talks with reporters outside the White House, Wednesday, July 1, 2020, in Washington.

Associated Press

fraud.

For instance, a Dec. 10 segment by Lou Dobbs accused Smartmatic and its CEO, Antonio Mugica, of working to flip votes through a non-existent backdoor in its voting software to carry out a "massive cyber Pearl Harbor," the complaint alleged.

"Defendants' story was a lie," the complaint stated. "But, it was a story that sold." The complaint also alleges that Fox hosts Dobbs, Maria Bartiromo and Jeanine Pirro also directly benefitted from their involvement in the conspiracy. The lawsuit alleges that Fox went along with the "well-orchestrated dance" due to pressure from newcomer outlets

such as Newsmax and One America News, which were stealing away conservative, pro-Trump viewers.

Roy Guterman, a media law professor at Syracuse University, said the lawsuit is compelling and based on specific examples and facts, not frivolous claims.

"This is a perfect example of why we have the law of defamation law in first place," said Guterman, a former reporter.

Fox News Media, in a statement on behalf of the network and its hosts, rejected the accusations. It said it is proud of its election coverage and would defend itself against the "meritless" lawsuit in court.

Fox "is committed to provid-

ing the full context of every story with in-depth reporting and clear opinion," the company said in a written statement.

Giuliani and Powell did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

For Smartmatic, the effects of the negative publicity were swift and devastating, the complaint alleges. Death threats, including against an executive's 14-year-old son, poured in as Internet searches for the company surged, Smartmatic claims.

With several client contracts in jeopardy, the company estimates that it will lose as much as \$690 million in profits over the next five years. It also expects it will

have to boost spending by \$4.7 million to fend off what it called a "meteoric rise" in cyberattacks.

"For us, this is an existential crisis," Mugica said in an interview. He said the false statements against Smartmatic have already led one foreign bank to close its accounts and deterred Taiwan, a prospective client, from adopting e-voting technology.

Like many conspiracy theories, the alleged campaign against Smartmatic was built on a grain of truth. Mugica is Venezuelan and Smartmatic's initial success is partly attributable to major contracts from Hugo Chávez's government, an early devotee of electronic voting.

No evidence has emerged that the company rigged votes in favor of the anti-American firebrand, and for a while the Carter Center and other observers held out Venezuela as a model of electronic voting. Meanwhile, the company has expanded globally.

Smartmatic is represented by J. Erik Connolly, who previously won what's believed to be the largest settlement in American media defamation, at least \$177 million, for a report on ABC News describing a company's beef product as "pink slime."

"Very rarely do you see news organization go day after day after day the same targets," Connolly said in an interview. □

Guard deployment to secure DC will cost nearly \$500 million

By LOLITA C. BALDOR

WASHINGTON (AP) — The cost of deploying about 26,000 National Guard troops to secure the U.S. Capitol in the wake of the deadly Jan. 6 riot is nearly \$500 million, U.S. military officials said Thursday.

The deployment brought troops in from all 50 states and four territories as law enforcement agencies tried to lock down the Capitol for the inauguration of the President Joe Biden. Thousands of Guard members poured into the

nation's capital and were stationed across the city to block traffic and protect lawmakers and landmarks. Officials said the nearly \$500 million includes the costs of transporting Guard troops from their states to Washington, their salaries and benefits, as well as housing and other essentials. The officials were not authorized to publicly discuss internal figures and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Because the troops were activated by the federal government for more than

30 days, their health benefits are also covered, adding to the price of the deployment.

Officials say the money is expected to cover the costs of the Guard through mid-March, when the troops are expected to leave. Between 5,000 and 7,000 troops are scheduled to stay in Washington through March 14.

The Department of Homeland Security has issued a terrorism bulletin warning about possible additional violence. □



Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin visits National Guard troops deployed at the U.S. Capitol and its perimeter, Friday, Jan. 29, 2021 on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

3 male guards accused in violent attack at NJ women's prison

By MIKE CATALINI

Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — A female inmate was punched 28 times and pepper-sprayed when guards attacked her and at least five other women, New Jersey officials said Thursday, bringing misconduct charges against three male prison guards.

New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir Grewal detailed the attack during a video news conference in which he said the guards at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women covered up the January attack by filing false reports. The charges come weeks after the attack made headlines when victims came forward to say they were beaten and sexually assaulted and dozens of guards were placed on paid leave.

Grewal said it's still early in the investigation, but he was announcing initial charges and revealing some details to "send a deterrent message."

"All of our residents have a right to be treated with basic decency and all of our officers have an obliga-



This photo from Monday June 21, 2004, shows inmate Mary Tobin walking a puppy down a cell block hallway at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women in Clinton, N.J.

Associated Press

tion to avoid force except when absolutely necessary," he said. "Those principles don't just apply to our streets and our schools but also in our prisons."

Two supervisors, Sgt. Amir Bethea and Sgt. Anthony Valvano, are charged with misconduct and tampering with records. Officer Luis Garcia is charged with those counts, plus aggravated assault.

A message was left with

Garcia's attorney. It's unclear who is representing Valvano and Bethea.

The Clinton facility — New Jersey's lone women's prison — has a "long, ugly history," Grewal said.

"That's why we must do more than simply figure out what went wrong on Jan. 11. We must hold the responsible parties accountable, and we must fix the systemic failures that made this incident possible," he

said.

Late on Jan. 11 and into the early hours of Jan. 12, about two dozen guards entered part of the prison and began to remove inmates, according to Grewal. A motive wasn't given, but Grewal said more information would be coming out.

One woman, Ajila Nelson, told NJ.com she believed the attack was in retaliation for complaints inmates had made.

One victim was pepper sprayed before the team of guards entered her cell, according to Grewal. Garcia then punched her about 28 times in and near her face, even though she had her arms up and was trying to protect herself, Grewal added.

Garcia then submitted a false report, saying that the victim was punching his torso, Grewal said. Video evidence, which Grewal said would eventually be released, shows Garcia punching the victim while she was facing a wall and does not show her punching the guard, according to the attorney general.

Bethea and Valvano did not stop other officers from striking another inmate, despite her complying with their orders to submit to being handcuffed, according to Grewal.

One victim was left with broken bones near her eye. Bethea and Valvano also filed false reports, Grewal

said. Bethea, for instance, failed to disclose that one victim had visible injuries to her mouth and lip, he said. Valvano falsely reported, according to Grewal, that a victim was banging her head into the cell door, which had to be breached to stop further injury. But video shows she never appeared to be hitting her head, and the victim denied she banged her head against anything, Grewal said.

Nelson told NJ.com that officers handcuffed her and others, before punching, kicking, stripping and dragging her to a shower, after which she says an unidentified male officer got on top of her and groped and sexually assaulted her.

The charges Grewal unveiled Thursday did not include sexual assault.

A transgender woman incarcerated at the facility was beaten by a group of officers and three officers stomped on her head, her mother, Trimeka Rollins, told NJ.com. Her daughter's knee was so badly damaged that she's now using a wheelchair, Rollins said.

Last week, Gov. Phil Murphy named former state comptroller Matt Boxer as an independent investigator into the allegations. In a statement Thursday, the governor said he was grateful Grewal took "swift action" after the "horrifying incident."

It's not the first time similar allegations have been raised at the prison, which has 395 inmates. In April, a U.S. Justice Department report found that the state corrections department and officials at prison violated inmates' constitutional rights by failing to protect them.

Several corrections officers at the prison have pleaded guilty or been convicted of sexual abuse and misconduct in recent years.

The union for correctional officers called the allegations "disturbing," but said it "fully supports a thorough investigation being conducted regarding the incidents at issue before any judgments are made." □



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Iraq sends mixed signals over closing camp for displaced

By FARID ABDULWAHED and
SAMYA KULLAB

Associated Press

QAYARA, Iraq (AP) — Iraq appears to have backtracked on plans to close a camp for internally displaced Iraqis, many with links to the Islamic State group, following a week of confusion and outcry from families unable to return home.

Evan Faeq Jabro, Iraq's minister of migration and displacement, told The Associated Press that the news the camp known as Jadah 5 in northern Iraq would close was false, and that it would remain open for the foreseeable future. However, a letter issued by the ministry's directorate in Ninevah province, addressed to its sub-districts and seen by the AP, had said closures would begin on Jan. 25, suggesting the federal government subsequently reversed the decision, or that there was miscommunication within ministry ranks.

The mixed signals reflect



Displaced Iraqis pack up in preparation to return to their homes in Jadah 5 camp in northern Iraq, Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021.

Associated Press

Iraq's real dilemma as it races to close all camps for IDPs in line with its plans to revive lagging reconstruction efforts in many cases without providing alternative housing or properly managing reconciliation with local tribes.

News of the order had prompted criticism from

many IDP families who said they felt forced to pack up and return to their destroyed, inhabitable homes. Some were subsequently sent back by vengeful tribes for their perceived links to IS.

"We were crying, we couldn't sleep the night," said a 37-year-old woman

who identified herself as Umm Abdulrahman and whose husband was an IS member. She said her tribe in the town of Hawija rejects her family's return and that the camp is safer than her hometown. "If they force us to go back, we will stay in the street."

Jabro, the minister, clari-

fied that Jadah 5 would remain open for now, and dismissed news of the closure. She said families had the choice to stay, or failing government-led reconciliation efforts, would be provided housing elsewhere.

"The ministry... didn't announce we will close the camp and we were surprised too when we read the announcement" she said.

Iraq began accelerating camp closures late last year across the country, prompting condemnation from international aid groups who criticized the scheme as rushed. Many IDPs pitched tents next to their destroyed homes.

Jadah 5, the last remaining camp in Ninevah, was expected to stay open to consolidate all these specific cases of IDPs and its closure would have disproportionately impacted them. It is not clear how many remain in the camp, which up until mid-January housed some 8,800 people. □

Australian prime minister says he invited Biden Down Under

By ROD MCGUIRK

Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)

— Australia's prime minister said he invited President Joe Biden to visit in September during a "very warm and engaging" phone call between the two leaders on Thursday.

"He sees the Australia-U.S. relationship as providing the anchor for peace and security in our region," Prime Minister Scott Morrison said. "And that is true. We share that view. In terms of our relations between Australia and the United States, there's nothing to fix there, only things to build on."

The White House later said Biden described Australia as an anchor of stability in the "Indo-Pacific and the world."

"They also agreed to work together, alongside other allies and partners, to hold to account those responsible for the coup in Burma,"

the White House statement said, referring to the country also known as Myanmar.

"The leaders affirmed their commitment to working together to advance our shared values, global security and prosperity," it added.

Morrison invited Biden to visit Australia to mark the 70th anniversary of the ANZUS Treaty, a defense agreement that once included New Zealand and was signed on Sept. 1, 1950.

Morrison said Biden reacted positively to the invitation.

"He told me he needs no special reason to come to Australia, he loves the place," Morrison said. "But they (Biden and first lady Jill Biden) would very much like to be in Australia at some point, and we'll see how that progresses."

American presidents making the 15,900-kilometer

(9,900-mile) flight between the two national capitals typically incorporate visits to Asia or Southeast Asian capitals.

Diplomatic travel has been virtually halted around the world by the coronavirus pandemic, but success in vaccinating people would allow for such trips to resume.

Australia has made exemptions to its own strict travel restrictions for important allies.

Australia's defense and foreign ministers highlighted the importance of the U.S. relationship by flying to Washington, D.C., for an annual bilateral meeting in July. They had to quarantine in a hotel for two weeks on their return.

Morrison's only overseas trip of the pandemic was to meet Japan's new Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga in November. He also had to quarantine on his return.

Morrison said his conver-

sation with the president also covered the alliance the two nations share with Japan and India known as the Quad as well as the Five-Eyes intelligence-sharing partnership that includes, Canada, Britain and New Zealand. They also discussed the pandemic and climate

change.

Morrison said he did not expect a change in U.S.-direction on China under the Biden administration.

"I think in the United States, Australia has, and remains to have, a very, very strong and effective partner on these issues of Indo-Pacific security," Morrison said. □



Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison speaks to the media during a press conference at Parliament House in Canberra, Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021.

Associated Press

U.N.: Ethiopia may not have control of a large part of Tigray

By CARA ANNA and EDITH M. LEDERER

Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — The United Nations humanitarian chief has privately told the U.N. Security Council that Ethiopia may not have control of up to 40% of the territory in its embattled Tigray region and does not have full command of forces from neighboring Eritrea operating there.

Details of the briefing by Mark Lowcock were shared by diplomats who spoke on condition of anonymity because Wednesday's meeting was a closed-door one. The Tigray conflict, which has entered its fourth month, remains largely in the shadows as Ethiopia faces growing pressure to open the region to journalists, independent investigators and far more humanitarian aid.

Thousands of people have been killed as Ethiopian and allied forces fight those of the now-fugitive Tigray government that once dominated the country's government for nearly three decades.

Available information indicates that Ethiopia's government now controls 60% to 80% of the territory in Tigray, Lowcock told diplo-



In this Dec. 13, 2020, file photo, refugees who fled the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region arrive from Village 8, the transit center near the Lugdi border crossing, at Umm Rakouba refugee camp in Qadarif, eastern Sudan.

mat. And some of the forces that sided with Ethiopian ones earlier in the conflict are reportedly now pursuing their own goals, he said. Ethiopia's government has denied the presence of soldiers from Eritrea, a bitter enemy of the former Tigray leaders, but witnesses have described widespread looting, killing and other abuses.

"Eritrean forces are almost everywhere in Tigray," one man who managed to

travel from northern Tigray to the regional capital, Mekele, told The Associated Press this week.

He described widespread looting of health centers and people dying from lack of care, with little to no communication or transport links to rural areas. He spoke on condition of anonymity because of concerns for family members.

A senior official in the interim Tigray government, Mesfin Desalegn, in an inter-

view with the pro-government Abbay Media outlet this week said Eritrean soldiers had entered the conflict "to destroy" the Tigray forces, "but it should have been managed. It should have been controlled." People have been "massacred," he said, describing an atmosphere of "complete vengefulness." He called for the Eritrean forces to "cease what they are doing."

The United States last month

told the AP it had pressed senior Eritrean officials for the immediate withdrawal of their forces from Tigray. The U.S. did not say how Eritrea, one of the world's most secretive nations, responded. Eritrea's information minister in recent days has denounced "frenzied defamation campaigns."

The fighting in Tigray has the potential to destabilize other parts of Ethiopia, Africa's second-most populous country and the anchor of the Horn of Africa, as security forces are deployed to the region, the U.N. humanitarian chief told the Security Council.

And starvation is a growing concern. Lowcock said the U.N. has received reports that food is scarce in markets mainly because it was harvest time when the conflict began. Main supply routes remain cut, cash is scarce and some people are reportedly eating leaves to survive.

"Many households are expected to have already depleted their food stocks, or are expected to deplete their food stocks in the next two months," according to a new report by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network, which is funded and managed by the U.S. □

Associated Press

U.N. envoy: Key military commander backs bid to unify Libya

By JAMEY KEATEN and SAMY MAGDY

Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The head of the United Nations mission in Libya said Thursday

the main military commander from the divided country's east has given his backing to an ongoing U.N. effort to choose an interim government before

an election can be held this year.

Stephanie Williams, the U.N. secretary-general's deputy special representative for political affairs in Libya, expressed hope that a 5-day meeting near Geneva this week would culminate Friday with the selection of an interim prime minister and a three-person Presidency Council.

The selections are seen as a key step for Libya nearly a decade after the ouster and death of leader Moammar Gadhafi. The meeting, the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, has brought together 75 delegates.

The devastated and lawless North African country is split between two

rival governments -- the internationally recognized one based in the capital, Tripoli, and another in the east. Turkey supports Tripoli, while Egypt, Russia and the United Arab Emirates support the forces of Khalifa Hifter, a military commander who runs most of the east and south.

Williams, an American diplomat who is serving in a temporary role as mission chief, said in an interview that she spoke to Hifter last week and he told her he was "fully supportive" of the U.N. efforts.

Once the caretaker government is assembled, she said, both of the current governments would disappear.

"Parallel institutions go

away: You have unity of institutions," Williams said.

She has repeatedly cautioned about the presence of foreign fighters and mercenaries in Libya, and estimated in December that they numbered at least 20,000.

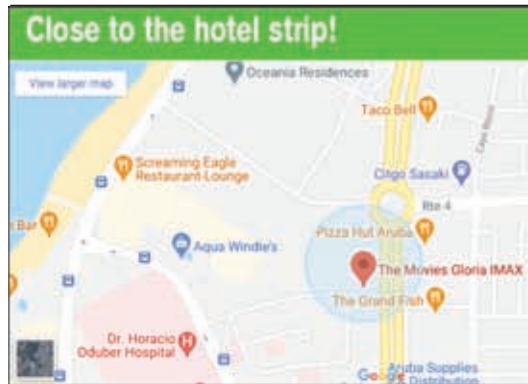
The Libyan Political Dialogue Forum is choosing the interim authority that will oversee Libya as part of an effort to rebuild state institutions and lead to a national election on Dec. 24.

The prime minister is to be chosen by the candidate winning 70% of votes. Twenty-one candidates are running for prime minister, and 24 candidates are vying for the presidential council posts. □



In this file photo dated Sunday, Nov. 15, 2020, Stephanie Williams, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission speaks during a news conference in Tunis, Tunisia.

Associated Press



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Brazil's anti-corruption 'Car Wash' task force ends in gloom

By MAURICIO SAVARESE
Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — A prominent task force of Brazilian prosecutors was officially disbanded Wednesday, marking the symbolic end of an investigative unit initially praised for tackling impunity among the nation's political and business elite but lately under fire for allegations of bias in its probes.

The "Car Wash" investigation began in March 2014 looking into black market money-changing involving a gas station in Brazil's capital, Brasilia, but it soon discovered billions of dollars in kickbacks related to construction contracts awarded by state-run oil giant Petrobras. Investigators found much of the illicit funds went to party coffers and politicians' pockets.

The unit shared its findings with other nations, which spread the anti-corruption



In this May 23, 2017 file photo, masks representing corrupt politicians line the lawn outside the National Congress building, in Brasilia, Brazil.

reckoning across the region.

Former presidents including Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula

da Silva, Peru's Alejandro Toledo, Panamá's Ricardo Martinelli and El Salvador's Mauricio Funes were

all jailed for some time as a result of Car Wash investigations as were top executives of the major

construction companies Odebrecht, Andrade Gutierrez, Queiroz Galvão and Camargo Correa. Odebrecht recently renamed itself Novonor.

The federal prosecutors' office in the state of Paraná said in a statement that the task force's nine members have been reassigned to a group that fights organized crime, named Gaeco. Five of them will pursue continuing Car Wash investigations, while four are taking on entirely new obligations. "The task force in Paraná ceases to exist, but some of its members will work at Gaeco with the objective of continuing their work," the statement said.

There were smaller spinoffs of Car Wash probes in the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Prosecutors in Rio will likewise be absorbed by Gaeco, while those in São Paulo resigned en masse last year. □

Associated Press

Taiwan opens trade office in Guyana in diplomatic win

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwan has established a trade office in the South American country of Guyana, a diplomatic win for the island that has continued to lose allies in an aggressive poaching campaign from China in recent years. China's Foreign Ministry responded swiftly, demanding that those concerned "avoid setting up any official institutions with each other, and take practical measures to correct mistakes and eliminate negative impacts." "We admonish the DPP authority that any attempt to seek support of foreign forces to engage in secessionist activities around the world will never succeed," ministry spokesperson

Wang Wenbin told reporters, referring to the initials of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party that rejects Beijing's demands for political unification. The Guyana facility will focus on cooperation in areas like agriculture, education and trade, Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said in an announcement on Thursday. It does not represent the establishment of formal diplomatic ties. Guyana said on Thursday that the facility will not lead to full diplomatic relations with Taiwan. "We very highly value our relations with China and will maintain that policy 100 percent," President Irfaan Ali said. Taiwan has been the subject of a massive pressure

campaign from China that claims the island as part of its territory — to be conquered by military force if necessary — and says it has no right to official exchanges with any foreign governments or multinational organizations such as the United Nations. Taiwan has just 15 formal diplomatic allies left, after two countries chose to switch diplomatic relations to China in 2019 from Taiwan. Taiwan also has a network of trade offices around the world that act as de-facto embassies, including in the United States, Japan and most other major nations. Also last year, Taiwan exchanged representative offices with the breakaway

Somali territory of Somaliland and to focus on trade and security in the Horn of Africa. China responded by accusing Taiwan of "undermining Somali sovereignty and territorial

integrity." China has frequently sought to scupper such arrangements in the past and has been using its massive economic resources to win over Taiwan's remaining allies. □



In this image made from video, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Joanne Ou points at a map of Guyana at a weekly press conference, Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021, in Taipei, Taiwan.

Associated Press

LOCAL



ORANJESTAD — Boosting a buyers confidence comes with a strong sales team, an established company name and experience. The Perret Group are the owners of among others Harbour House Aruba and they live up to the expectation. With 80 % of the condominiums sold in their residence they can do nothing more but be content. Take a look at this cool site reflecting best of two worlds: beach and city.

The residence consists of 94 units in the former 7-level Marazul building at the historical location of Paardenbaai. Harbour House Aruba is the ultimate smart investment or personal living space. Harbour House's sales manager explains why. "A state-of-the-art lobby, an ocean-view gym, bar service, rooftop with 360 degrees view of Oran-

Harbour House Aruba: "80 % sold already, we are doing great"

jestad, on-site parking, 24-hours security and a top floor lounge area with Jacuzzi's. Cherry on the cake: an infinity pool."

Harbour House Aruba offers cosmopolitan living in a beach-chic environment. The residence is fast-selling their studios, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units for many reasons but in a nutshell we can name: great location, great value for your money and great quality. To see exactly what still is available you may check the website which shows you a map with sold and open units. Updates on construction are also on forehand. When you live abroad stopping by to check upon your purchase is not that simple, yet with the monthly updates on their website, it is a lot easier.

"There are only a few units



left, now we are working on the amenities like the pool that is almost finished. We are installing the Jacuzzi area on top and we have all the exterior windows in so we are right on schedule, expecting to deliver in September," the sales manager explains.

The process of purchase is easy, whether you are abroad or on the island. Make an appointment through the website to visit the sales office when you are here. In that way you can actually see the unit, materials and amenities. If you are not on the island the website can help you out and the sales office is happy to send you all needed documentation for you to orientate. "When agreed upon the unit you sign an agreement and move forward with the down payment which is \$ 30.000. At receipt of that amount the sales is closed and the price will not change. You know what you get and will not be surprised by price changes. The payment agreements after the deposit will be discussed and are flexible. We assist also in financing by banks."

The ground level of the building will provide a gallery of restaurants, art gallery, stores, and supermarket. "We get in more requests for renting and so far we have restaurant, salon, mini market, art gallery a craft beer factory which makes up for a great variation. A parking lot will be assigned to the owners and visitors."

City elegance combined with tropical tranquility is what you get here. The panoramas are breath-taking. Can you imagine yourself with your favorite cup of joe, gazing out over the ocean while the city of Oranjestad is awakening? The new trend is to live tinier but comfy and Harbour House meets this market demand with the perfect product. Everything is close, you are centrally located, just a step away from the beach though right in the main area in Oranjestad. You have history to tell and you are within walking distance to all Oranjestad has to offer. What else do you need?

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Papillon: the butterfly effect of magnificent food

PALM BEACH — Do you remember the film “Papillon” starring Steve McQueen? Papillon restaurant is the island’s example where ‘life imitates art.’ The décor, especially the restrooms, was inspired by the movie. For more than a decade this restaurant has built a reputation with the fusion of classic French cuisine, Dutch and Caribbean flavors. Welcome in the world of wonders where ambiance, taste and service come together and you feel you are being welcomed in the home of the owner and her team.

“We find it really important that our guests have fun; can relax while listening to live music while their taste buds are being tickled by France, The Netherlands and the Caribbean. We offer a unique fusion of dishes and a night not to forget,” says owner Tina. She points out that all Covid-protocol is in place here, they are very keen on hygiene and offer outside dining on a cozy, elegant terrace with social distancing in place and right on the high-rise strip.

Oysters, caviar and wild boar

You are on vacation, life is to enjoy! If you want something special, a different flow than the usual then Papillon is the place to go. Foodies are in heaven here with classic French dishes such as Foie Gras, Frog Legs, fresh Oysters coming in on a weekly basis with KLM, Escargots, Dover Sole à la Meunière flown in from Europe and filleted at the table, Duck Breast seared on the skin, roasted and braised Lamb in Balashi beer and slow braised Wild Boar Shank. Do not leave without trying the exclusive recommendation: Caviar! All of this combined with an extensive wine list from around the world makes Papillon a must-do on your Aruban vacation.



Tina: “Our chef is from Peru and at the moment we have the renowned guest chef Griet Vanbrabant who worked in Michelin star restaurants like El Bulli in Spain which happened to be the world’s best restaurant for many years and Pujol in Mexico. So this is the time to come over and reserve your table.”

Let the music play!

Twice a week you can enjoy the tunes of live sax player Jairo or the famous Marisela who enchants you with her acoustic performance accompanied by percussion only. The musicians interact with the guests, requests can be send in, the live tunes definitely add to the experience.

Vegetarian vibes present

Impressive vegetarian/vegan dishes are set up especially for the guests by the chef and Meredith from Vegan Aruba. “We offer vegan choices that are really good and tasty. Our daily soup is always vegan too.” What are you waiting for, make sure to pay a visit to this elegant yet laid-back restaurant while on Aruba. You are most welcome! Papillon Restaurant is located at The Village across the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino and within walking distance of all other major hotels.

Make your reservation today at:
info@papillonaruba.com
or call/WhatsApp + 00297 699 5490

Open Daily: 5pm – 10.00PM
For all menus and specials visit the website: www.papillonaruba.com. □



Top US media names Bucuti & Tara No. 1 Aruba Hotel, top 25 Caribbean Resort Awards from US News & World Report, Booking.com, Expedia and AAA



EAGLE BEACH — In a year where the world faced unparalleled challenges due to the pandemic, good news is welcomed more than ever at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort. Top American media outlet US News & World Report and global travel and rating sites Booking.com, Expedia and AAA have each honored the Eagle Beach resort with their annual accolades.

"We are always grateful to receive award recognition from US News & World Report, Booking.com, Expedia and AAA and particularly this year, we thank guests who are researching and making highly selective vacation decisions as they now factor in the type of COVID-19 wellness and safety protocols in place at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort," shares Owner/CEO of Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort. "These awards are a testament to our hard-working Bucuti Associates who continue to rise to the occa-

sion, one like never before, and deliver a world-class vacation."

U.S. News & World Report

American media outlet U.S. News & World Report unveiled its 2021 Best Hotels rankings today. Bucuti & Tara a coveted Gold Badge once again ranking at the No. 1 Best Hotel in Aruba and among the Top 25 Best Resorts in the Caribbean.

The 11th annual Best Hotels rankings evaluated more than 30,000 luxury hotels worldwide. US News & World Report editors use a methodology that combines dozens of data points including a hotel's rating, expert and guest sentiment, awards from distinguished travel publications in using an unbiased approach to calculate the rankings. The highest honor – the Gold Badge – was awarded to just 10% including Bucuti & Tara.

Booking.com –Traveller Review Award 2021: reveals cleanliness more important than ever

Major online reservations platform Booking.com honored Bucuti & Tara with a Traveler Review Award 2021. With a near-perfect score of 9.6 out of 10, this year's ratings revealed that global travelers appreciate staff, cleanliness and location most. On average, winners had a cleanliness score that was 17% higher than the average cleanliness score for non-winners, highlighting that hygiene is a key component to great guest experiences, such as Bucuti & Tara's COVID-19 safety protocols, now more than ever.

"As trips became fewer and further between, each and every trip meant more to travelers than ever before, and it has become even more important to celebrate the outstanding service that the Traveler Review Award winners displayed during a year like no other," said Arjan Dijk, SVP and Chief Marketing Officer for Booking.com.

Expedia

Expedia, one of the world's two largest full-service online travel sites, has ranked Bucuti & Tara the No. 1 Resort on Aruba. The score of 4.8 out of 5 notes that the adults-only enclave is "Exceptional."

AAA Award of Excellence: Housekeeping

Four Diamond designated Bucuti & Tara also has been recognized with the 2020 AAA Inspector's Best of Housekeeping Award, granted to hotels that earn the highest possible cleanliness and condition scores.

While cleanliness has long been a key quality standard, the pandemic has made it paramount with travelers. Those who have vacationed at Bucuti & Tara throughout the pandemic have continued to highlight its COVID-19 safety and wellness protocols on platforms including

Tripadvisor, Expedia, Booking.com and AAA.

To learn more and book a vacation, visit Bucuti.com.

About Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort

Declared the first Carbon-Neutral®/net zero hotel in the Caribbean in August 2018, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort is one of the Top 10 Hotels for Romance in the World, No. 1 Hotel in the Caribbean, No. 1 Hotel for Romance in the Caribbean (fifth straight year) and No. 3 Hotel for Service in the Caribbean. Aruba's premier adults-only boutique resort is led by celebrated hotelier and environmentalist, Ewald Biemans, named by Caribbean Journal as the 2017 Caribbean Hotelier of the Year. The resort is nestled on the powdery white sands of Eagle Beach, home to protected sea turtles and named one of the "Dream Beaches of the World."

Now home to the Caribbean's Safest, Healthiest Vacation Experience thanks to its physician-developed COVID-19 safety protocols and Aruba's Health & Happiness Code seal, Bucuti has 104 well-appointed guestrooms, suites and penthouses. It offers sunbeds and shade for every guest; freshwater infinity pool; spa; WiFi; and complimentary iPad with Skype for use during stay. Award-winning healthy dining is enjoyed at oceanfront Elements, Tara Lounge and private beach dining. Reserved exclusively for guests and their friends, the newly renovated open-air SandBar offers top-shelf cocktails and live music daily along with the Caribbean's first Healthy Hour. The resort is TAG Approved® as a LG-BTQ-friendly hotel. Bucuti, a worldwide sustainable tourism leader, holds eco-certifications of LEED Gold, Green Globe Platinum, ISO 14001 and Travelife Gold and was named the World's Most Sustainable Hotel/Resort in 2016 by Green Globe. □

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Sitting on billions, Catholic dioceses amassed taxpayer aid

By REESE DUNKLIN and MICHAEL REZENDES
Associated Press

Scores of Roman Catholic dioceses in the U.S. had more than \$10 billion in cash and other readily available funds when they received at least \$1.5 billion from the nation's emergency relief program for small businesses slammed by the coronavirus, an Associated Press investigation has found.

Taxpayer-backed aid from the Paycheck Protection Program was supposed to help recipients that lacked the kind of financial safety net that cash and short-term assets provide.

While dioceses, their churches and schools went into the pandemic with billions, the cash catastrophe church leaders feared did not materialize, AP found. New financial statements that several dozen dioceses have posted for 2020 show available resources improved despite the pandemic's hard, early months — the same time they sought paycheck protection aid.

The pattern held whether a diocese was big or small, urban or rural, East or West, North or South.

In Kentucky, funds available to the Archdiocese of Louisville, its parishes and other organizations grew from at least \$153 million to at least \$157 million during the fiscal year that ended in June, AP found. Those same offices and organizations received at least \$17 million in paycheck aid. "The Archdiocese's operations have not been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak," according to its financial statement.

In North Carolina, the Raleigh Diocese and its churches and schools collected at least \$11 million. Yet during the church's 2020 fiscal year, overall offerings were down just 5% and assets available to the diocese, its parishes and schools increased by about \$21 million to more than \$170 million, AP found. Raleigh officials did not answer direct questions.



This Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2021, photo shows the Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral in Raleigh, N.C.
Associated Press

In Illinois, the Archdiocese of Chicago had more than \$1 billion in cash and investments in its headquarters and cemetery division as of May, while the faithful continued to donate "more than expected," according to the independent ratings agency Moody's Investors Service. Chicago's parishes, schools and ministries accumulated at least \$77 million.

Archdiocesan officials said the money was needed to cover substantial expenses while parishioner donations slumped when lockdowns forced the cancellation of Masses. Without paycheck support, "parishes and schools would have been forced to cut many jobs" because the archdiocese couldn't have made up the difference given its own expenses, spokeswoman Paula Waters wrote.

The financial resources of several dioceses rivaled or exceeded those available to publicly traded companies — like Shake Shack and Ruth's Chris Steak House — whose participation in the paycheck program triggered outrage last spring. The two joined others companies in returning the money.

On top of good financial

planning, dioceses benefited when U.S. stock markets rebounded and parishioners found ways to continue donating.

AP's analysis focused on available assets because federal officials tied those metrics to program eligibility. Therefore, the \$10 billion AP identified doesn't count important financial pillars of the church in the U.S., including its real estate holdings and an estimated \$9.5 billion held by charitable foundations created to help dioceses.

Church officials have said their employees were as worthy of paycheck program help as workers at Main Street businesses, and that without it they would have had to curtail their charitable mission as demand for food pantries and social services spiked. They point out the program's rules didn't require them to exhaust cash or reserves. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops did not directly answer questions.

Presented with AP's findings, spokeswoman Chieko Noguchi responded that paycheck support was "designed to protect the jobs of Americans from all walks of life."

The AP's assessment of church finances is among the most comprehensive to date. It draws largely from audited financial statements posted by the central offices of 112 of the country's nearly 200 dioceses.

A majority of these dioceses reported enough money on hand to cover at least six months of operating expenses, even without any new income, at the start of the fiscal year that included the pandemic's arrival. Yet AP's investigation found the Roman Catholic Church was perhaps the biggest beneficiary of the small business program.

By using a special exemption that the church lobbied to include, Catholic entities across the nearly 200 dioceses amassed at least \$3 billion. That was roughly the same, AP found, as the combined total of other faith-based recipients that rounded out the top five: Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Jewish.

Catholic institutions also received many times more than other major nonprofits with charitable missions and national reach, such as the United Way and Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Overall, Catholic recipients

got roughly twice as much as 40 of the largest charities in America combined.

In their financial statements, the 112 dioceses acknowledged having at least \$4.5 billion in liquid or otherwise available assets. To reach its \$10 billion total, AP included funding that dioceses opted to designate for special projects instead of general expenses; excess cash parishes and their affiliates deposit with their diocese's savings and loan; and lines of credit, typically with outside banks. Some church officials said AP was misreading their finances and therefore overstating available assets. They insisted that money diocesan leaders set aside for special projects couldn't be repurposed during an emergency, though financial statements posted by multiple dioceses stated the opposite.

For its analysis, AP consulted experts in church law and finance. One was the Rev. James Connell, an accountant before joining the priesthood and becoming an administrator in the Milwaukee Archdiocese. Connell, also an expert in church law who is now retired from his position with the archdiocese, said AP's findings convinced him that Catholic entities did not need government aid. AP found other internal skeptics. A church pastor in a Western state said he refused to apply even after diocesan officials pressed him, with one questioning why he was "leaving free money on the table." He requested anonymity because of his diocese's policy against talking to reporters and concerns about retaliation.

When the pandemic hit, the pastor used parish savings and trimmed expenses. He said he felt a "sound moral conviction" that the federal funds were meant for shops and restaurants that, without it, might close forever.

"We didn't need it," the pastor said, "and intentionally wanted to leave the money for those small business owners who did." □

'New chance at life': Man gets face, hands in rare surgery

By **MARION RENAULT and MARSHALL RITZEL**
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Almost six months after a rare face and hands transplant, Joe DiMeo is relearning how to smile, blink, pinch and squeeze.

The 22-year-old New Jersey resident had the operation last August, two years after being badly burned in a car crash.

"I knew it would be baby steps all the way," DiMeo told The Associated Press. "You've got to have a lot of motivation, a lot of patience. And you've got to stay strong through everything."

Experts say it appears the surgery at NYU Langone Health was a success, but warn it'll take some time to say for sure.

U.S. surgeons have completed at least 18 face transplants and 35 hand transplants, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing, or UNOS, which oversees the nation's transplant system.

But simultaneous face and double hand transplants are extremely rare and have only been tried twice before. The first attempt was in 2009 on a patient in Paris who died about a month later from complications. Two years later, Bos-



Joe DiMeo poses for a portrait, Monday, Jan. 25, 2021 at NYU Langone Health in New York, six months after an extremely rare double hand and face transplant.

Associated Press

ton doctors tried it again on a woman who was mauled by a chimpanzee, but ultimately had to remove the transplanted hands days later.

"The fact they could pull it off is phenomenal," said Dr. Bohdan Pomahac, a surgeon at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital who led the second such attempt. "I know firsthand it's incredibly complicated. It's a tremendous success."

DiMeo will be on lifelong medications to avoid rejecting the transplants, as

well as continued rehabilitation to gain sensation and function in his new face and hands.

In 2018, DiMeo fell asleep at the wheel, he said, after working a night shift as a product tester for a drug company.

The car hit a curb and utility pole, flipped over, and burst into flames. Another driver who saw the accident pulled over to rescue DiMeo.

Afterward, he spent months in a medically induced coma and underwent 20

reconstructive surgeries and multiple skin grafts to treat his extensive third-degree burns.

Once it became clear conventional surgeries could not help him regain full vision or use of his hands, DiMeo's medical team began preparing for the risky transplant in early 2019.

"Within the world of transplantation, they're probably the most unusual," said Dr. David Klassen, UNOS chief medical officer.

Almost immediately, the NYU team encountered

challenges including finding a donor.

Doctors estimated he only had a 6% chance of finding a match compatible with his immune system. They also wanted to find someone with the same gender, skin tone and hand dominance.

Then during the search for a donor, the pandemic hit and organ donations plummeted. During New York City's surge, members of the transplant unit were reassigned to work in COVID-19 wards.

In early August, the team finally identified a donor in Delaware and completed the 23-hour procedure a few days later.

They amputated both of DiMeo's hands, replacing them mid-forearm and connecting nerves, blood vessels and 21 tendons with hair-thin sutures. They also transplanted a full face, including the forehead, eyebrows, nose, eyelids, lips, both ears and underlying facial bones. "The possibility of us being successful based on the track record looked slim," said Dr. Eduardo Rodriguez, who led the medical team of more than 140 people. "It's not that someone has done this many times before and we have a kind of a schedule, a recipe to follow." □

Can I take painkillers before or after a COVID-19 vaccine?

By **MARILYNN MARCHIONE**
AP Chief Medical Writer

Can I take painkillers before or after a COVID-19 vaccine?

It's best to avoid them, unless you routinely take

them for a medical condition.

Although the evidence is limited, some painkillers might interfere with the very thing the vaccine is trying to do: generate a

strong immune system response. Vaccines work by tricking the body into thinking it has a virus and mounting a defense against it.

That may cause arm soreness, fever, headache, muscle aches or other temporary symptoms of inflammation that can be part of that reaction.

"These symptoms mean your immune system is revving up and the vaccine is working," Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said in a recent news briefing.

Certain painkillers that target inflammation, including ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin

and other brands) might curb the immune response. A study on mice in the Journal of Virology found these drugs might lower production of antibodies — helpful substances that block the virus from infecting cells.

If you're already taking one of those medications for a health condition, you should not stop before you get the vaccine — at least not without asking your doctor, said Jonathan Watanabe, a pharmacist at the University of California, Irvine.

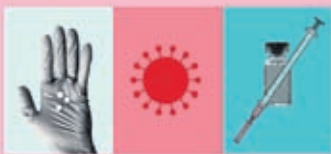
People should not take a painkiller as a preventive measure before getting a vaccine unless a doctor

has told them to, he said. The same goes for after a shot: "If you don't need to take it, you shouldn't," Watanabe said.

If you do need one, acetaminophen (Tylenol) "is safer because it doesn't alter your immune response," he added.

The CDC offers other tips, such as holding a cool, wet washcloth over the area of the shot and exercising that arm. For fever, drink lots of fluids and dress lightly.

Call your doctor if redness or tenderness in the arm increases after a day or if side effects don't go away after a few days, the CDC says. □



Illustration/Peter Hamlin

Associated Press

Japan scientists to study source of high heat on asteroid

By MARI YAMAGUCHI
TOKYO (AP) — Japanese space experts said Thursday they will examine soil samples brought back from a distant asteroid in an attempt to find the source of heat that altered the celestial body, in their search for clues to the origin of the solar system and life on Earth. Scientists at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency said they have made a preliminary examination of 5.4 grams (0.19 ounce) of soil, far more than the minimum 0.1 gram sample they had hoped for, which the Hayabusa2 spacecraft brought back in December from the asteroid Ryugu, more than 300 million kilometers (190 million miles) from Earth. About 3 grams (0.1 ounce) of the black granules are from Ryugu's surface and were gathered when Hayabusa2 touched down on the asteroid in April 2019. About 2 grams of larger fragments, up to about 1 centimeter (0.4 inch), were obtained from under the surface in a crater made by Hayabusa2 when it landed a second time three months later. Based on near-infrared spectrophotometer analysis of data transmitted by

Hayabusa2, JAXA scientists found that the asteroid was exposed to extremely high temperatures both on its surface and underground, possibly caused by an internal source of heat or planetary collisions rather than heat from the sun. Kohei Kitazato, a University of Aizu planetary scientist working with JAXA, said his team found indications of heat exceeding 300 degrees Celsius (572 degrees Fahrenheit) both on the asteroid surface and underground. He said the soil underground would not reach that temperature from the



This optical microscope file photo provided on Dec. 24, 2020, by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), shows soil samples, seen inside C compartment of the capsule brought back by Hayabusa2, in Sagami-hara, near Tokyo.

Associated Press

heat of the sun alone, suggesting that radiative internal heat or planetary collisions affected Ryugu when it was still part of a parent body billions of years ago, causing evaporation of its

water. □

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

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Hunter Biden’s memoir ‘Beautiful Things’ out in April

By HILLEL ITALIE
AP National Writer
NEW YORK (AP) — Hunter Biden, son of President Joe Biden and an ongoing target for conservatives, has a memoir coming out April 6. The book is called “Beautiful Things” and will center on the younger Biden’s well publicized struggles with substance abuse, according to Gallery Books, an imprint of Simon & Schuster. Acquired in the fall of 2019, “Beautiful Things” was kept under wraps even as Biden’s business dealings became a fixation of then-President Donald Trump and others during the election and his finances a matter of investigation by the Justice Department. “Beautiful Things” was circulated among several authors and includes advance praise from Stephen King, Dave Eggers and Anne Lamott. “In his harrowing and compulsively readable memoir, Hunter Biden proves again that anybody — even the son of a United States President — can take a ride on the pink horse down nightmare alley,” King writes in his blurb. “Biden remembers it all and tells it all with a bravery that is both



This cover image released by Gallery Books shows “Beautiful Things” a memoir by Hunter Biden.

Associated Press

heartbreaking and quite gorgeous. He starts with a question: Where’s Hunter? The answer is he’s in this book, the good, the bad, and the beautiful.” In a snippet released by Gallery, Biden writes in his

book, “I come from a family forged by tragedies and bound by a remarkable, unbreakable love.” The president and first lady released a statement Thursday saying, “We admire our son Hunter’s strength and courage to talk openly about his addiction so that others might see themselves in his journey and find hope.” During one of last fall’s presidential debates, Joe Biden defended his son from attacks by Trump. “My son, like a lot of people, like a lot of people you know at home, had a drug problem,” the Democratic candidate said. “He’s overtaken it. He’s fixed it. He’s worked on it, and I’m proud of him. I’m proud of my son.” Hunter Biden, who turned 51 Thursday, is the oldest surviving child of the president, who lost his first wife and 1-year-old daughter, Naomi, in a 1972 car accident, and son Beau Biden to brain cancer in 2015. The title of Hunter’s book refers to an expression he and his brother would use with each other after Beau’s diagnosis, meant to emphasize what was important in life. Hunter Biden is a lawyer

and former lobbyist whose work helped lead to the first impeachment of Trump. Biden joined the board of the Ukrainian gas company Burisma in 2014, around the time his father, then U.S. vice president, was helping conduct the Obama administration’s foreign policy in that region. Trump and others have insisted that Biden was exploiting his father’s name, and they raised unsubstantiated charges of corruption. The House of Representatives voted to impeach Trump in 2019 after learning that he had pressured Ukraine’s president to announce it was investigating the Bidens. Trump was acquitted by the Senate. Last December, Hunter Biden confirmed that the Justice Department was looking into his tax affairs, and The Associated Press subsequently reported that he had received a subpoena asking about his interaction with numerous business entities. Though Trump made clear publicly that he wanted a special counsel to handle the investigation, then-Attorney General William Barr did not appoint one. Biden has denied any wrongdoing. □

Former flight attendant lands 7-figure deal for 2 novels

By HILLEL ITALIE
AP National Writer
NEW YORK (AP) — A one-time flight attendant who conjured fictional nightmares during breaks on

cross country red-eyes has a 7-figure deal for two novels. The Simon & Schuster imprint Avid Reader Press announced Thursday that T.J. Newman’s first book,

the thriller “Falling,” comes out in July. The narrative is a horror story — a different kind of airplane read — that understandably gave the author chills. On a crowded flight from Los Angeles to New York, passengers are unaware that the pilot’s family has been kidnapped and the pilot must crash the plane to save them. Newman came up with the idea during one work shift when the passengers were sleeping. “I’m looking out at the passengers and it’s quiet and it’s dark and it occurred to me at that moment how vulnerable the passengers were at the hands of the two men who were flying the plane,” she said during

a recent telephone interview, adding that she later described the plot of her book to one of the pilots and asked what he would do in that situation. “And he didn’t have an answer. It was right there that I knew I had to figure it out.” Newman, 36, is a native and longtime resident of Arizona who has been writing stories for much of her life and had tried acting and bookselling before becoming a flight attendant a decade ago, a profession shared with her sister and mother. After completing a draft of her novel, she tried finding an agent but was turned down dozens of times before taken on by Shane

Salerno of The Story Factory, where other writers include Don Winslow and Janet Evanovich. The acquiring editor at Avid Reader, Jofie-Ferrari Adler, said she was impressed by the book’s “undeniable authenticity” and called it a “great escape in these difficult times.” “One of my colleagues actually read it on a plane and loved it,” she said. □



This combination of photos shows the cover of “Falling,” a novel by T.J. Newman, left, and a portrait of Newman.

Associated Press

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3	9	2	7	8	1	6	4	5
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AP NewsBreak: MLB average salary fell for 3rd straight year

NEW YORK (AP) — The average Major League Baseball salary dropped for an unprecedented third straight year, even before the shortened season caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The Major League Baseball Players Association said Thursday the 2020 average would have been \$3.89 million if a full season had been played. That was down 4.2% from the 2019 average of \$4.05 million and represented a 5.2% decrease from the record average of just under \$4.1 million in 2017. The average started to slip in 2018, falling by \$1,436.

Because the pandemic caused players to receive roughly 37% of pay last year, the actual average plunged to \$1.59 million, its lowest since 1998.

"We have been consistent in our position that the current trends in our game need to be addressed regarding the lack of incentive to compete and the need for the system to better reflect the value created by players throughout the service time spectrum," union head Tony Clark said in an email to The Associated Press. "While there are other forces at play, and concerns that we have in addition to the above, we look forward to discussing each of the issues I just highlighted as a way to move our industry forward." Before 2018 and 2019, the average had not dropped in consecutive years since the union started tracking it at \$19,000 in 1967. Before



Milwaukee Brewers' Christian Yelich waits to bat during a baseball game against the Cincinnati Reds in Cincinnati, in this Monday, Sept. 21, 2020, file photo.

Associated Press

the last three years, the only decreases had been in 1987, when clubs were found guilty by an arbitrator of collusion against free agents; in 1995, after the end of a 7 1/2-month strike; and in 2004.

Last year's drop showed the widening imbalance between top stars and other players. The average fell despite Gerrit Cole, Stephen Strasburg, Anthony Rendon and Christian Yelich all starting long-term contracts guaranteeing \$215 million or more.

The union's annual survey included 1,087 players, up from 988 in 2019. Active rosters were scheduled to expand from 25 to 26 for the 2020 season and went up to 28 because of the

pandemic, which likely is responsible for part of the decrease. More players were in the major leagues with salaries closer to the minimum, which rose to \$563,500 from \$555,000.

Without adjusting for the pandemic, the average of players with five to six years of major league service — the group one year from free agency — dropped from \$7.57 million in 2019 to \$6.51 million in 2020.

Among players eligible for salary arbitration, the 5-6-year group fell to \$6.51 million from \$7.57 million; the 4-5-year group rose to \$4.49 million from \$4.43 million; the 3-4-year group dropped to \$2.8 million from \$2.92 million; and the 2 years, 115 days to 3-year

group dropped to \$2.05 million from \$2.15 million. Players needed 2 years, 115 days to be eligible for arbitration.

Among players not yet eligible for arbitration, the 2 years to 2 years, 114 days group fell to \$673,000 from \$935,000; the 1-2 year group rose to \$787,000 from \$653,000; and the 0-1 group rose to \$640,000 from \$617,000.

Major League Baseball's final 2020 report last month showed payrolls plunged to \$1.75 billion during the pandemic-shortened season from \$4.22 billion. That included a drop in base wages to \$1.54 billion from \$3.99 billion, excluding prorated shares of signing bonuses, earned bonuses and

option buyouts.

MLB estimated that if full salaries had been paid and a complete schedule played with the usual average of callups from the minors, payrolls likely would have increased by 4% from 2019.

Players have been angered by club behavior in recent years, raising the chance of a work stoppage when the five-year collective bargaining agreement expires Dec. 1.

The current labor deal included steep luxury tax surtaxes, and only two teams, World Series champion Washington and Boston, exceeded the lowest tax threshold of \$197 million in 2018, followed by the New York Yankees, Boston and the Chicago Cubs going over the \$206 million threshold in 2019. Collection of the tax was suspended last year because of the pandemic.

Players lost a grievance last year claiming the Chicago Cubs improperly delayed star Kris Bryant's debut at the start of the 2015 season in an effort to delay the third baseman's eligibility for free agency. The union also filed a grievance in February 2018 against Miami, Oakland, Pittsburgh and Tampa Bay Rays that accused them of improperly spending revenue-sharing money, a case that is still pending.

The union has repeatedly said that teams cutting major league payroll in rebuilding, which players call tanking, is detrimental to the industry. □

Gamine DQ'd from Kentucky Oaks, trainer Bob Baffert fined

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Gamine has been disqualified from a third-place finish in last year's Kentucky Oaks and Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert fined \$1,500 after a post-race test showed the filly had an anti-inflammatory in her system.

Kentucky stewards issued their ruling Jan. 30 and it was posted on the Kentucky Horse Racing Com-

mission's website this week. Baffert waived his right to a formal hearing before the stewards.

The stewards ordered Gamine's prize money of \$120,000 from the Sept. 4 race at Churchill Downs to be forfeited. As a result of the DQ, Speech was moved up from fourth to third in the Oaks, which was won by Sheddaredevil.

Gamine's post-race blood test revealed the presence of the anti-inflammatory betamethasone, which is legal in Kentucky but must be cleared at least 14 days before a race. It is a Class C drug in the state.

Gamine's positive test was first reported in October by the New York Times, which cited anonymous sources. Baffert's attorney, Craig Robertson, also confirmed

the result.

Before the Kentucky Oaks, Gamine was disqualified from a May 2 race that she won at Oaklawn Park in Arkansas. A post-race test showed the local anesthetic lidocaine in her system. Another Baffert horse, Charlatan, was disqualified the same day from his victory in a division of the Arkansas Derby for the same medication. Baffert

maintained both incidents were the result of accidental contamination as the result of one of his employees wearing a patch that contained lidocaine. Oaklawn stewards suspended him for 15 days.

Baffert has appealed the test results and disqualifications at Oaklawn. The cases have yet to be heard before the Arkansas Racing Commission. □

Chiefs under pressure to ditch the tomahawk chop celebration

By **HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH**

Associated Press

Pressure is mounting for the Super Bowl-bound Kansas City Chiefs to abandon a popular tradition in which fans break into a "war chant" while making a chopping hand motion designed to mimic the Native American tomahawk.

Local groups have long argued that the team's chop tradition and even its name itself are derogatory to American Indians, yet the national attention focused for years on the Washington football team's use of the name Redskins and the cartoonish Chief Wahoo logo, long the emblem for the Cleveland Indians baseball team. But in the past year, those teams have decided to ditch their Native American-themed monikers, and the defending champion Chiefs are generating more attention due to a second consecutive appearance on the sport's biggest stage.

A coalition of Native American groups has put up billboards in the Kansas City area to protest the tomahawk chop and Chiefs' name. A protest is planned outside Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, site of Sunday's game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and the coalition has hired a plane to fly around the area. A few thousand people have signed onto two online petitions, one of them started by a fourth-grader.



In this Dec. 13, 2018, photo, Kansas City Chiefs fans chant and do the chop during the second half of the team's NFL football game against the Los Angeles Chargers in Kansas City, Mo.

Associated Press

The Chiefs made some changes in the fall, barring headdresses and war paint and making a subtle alteration to the chop, with cheerleaders using a closed fist instead of an open palm to signal the beating of a drum.

But Gaylene Crouser, executive director of the Kansas City Indian Center, found the tweak to be laughable. "They think that that somehow helps, and they are still playing that ridiculous Hollywood Indian song, which is such a stereotypical Indian song from like old Cowboy movies or something. I don't know how they feel that that made any difference at all," she said. "And it's not like their fans are doing it any different either."

Chiefs president Mark Donovan said barring face paint and headdresses from its stadium was a "big step."

"You are going to have opinions on all sides on what we should and shouldn't do," he added. "We're going to continue to have those discussions. We're going to continue to make changes going forward, and hopefully changes that do what we hope, which is respect and honor Native American heritage while celebrating the fan experience."

But the changes aren't nearly enough for the St. Petersburg-based Florida Indigenous Rights and Environmental Equality, which plans to protest near the

stadium Sunday ahead of the kickoff, singing and holding signs.

Group co-founder Alicia Norris described the chop as "extremely disrespectful," saying it "conjures up images of Native Americans, indigenous people as savages."

"Now the team wants to backtrack and say we are being culturally appropriate and we are being respectful of indigenous people by saying no headdresses," she said. "And that is a good start, but the fans are still operating as if it is an indigenous-type atmosphere because you are still called the Chiefs. And you can still do this movement that looks like a tomahawk chop, but we are going to

call it a drum beat instead. It is kind of silly. Just change it."

Fans of the Chiefs long ago adopted the chanting and arm movement symbolizing the brandishing of a tomahawk that began at Florida State University in the 1980s. "When we are down it is a rally cry," said Kile Chaney, a 42-year-old stone mason from Harrisonville, Missouri. "Just to hear all the fans doing the tomahawk chop and hear it echo through the corridors, it is a beautiful noise that we make here."

Aaron Bien, a 61-year-old automotive repair and body shop owner from Hillside, Kansas, described it as no different than any cheer.

"It is the soul. It is the lifeblood," said Bien, who had been a Chiefs season ticket holder for 15 years before the pandemic limited seating capacity in the stadium this season.

He said the chop has "nothing to do with Native Americans," noting that the origin of the Chiefs nickname may have more to do with the mayor who helped lure the franchise from Dallas in 1963.

Mayor H. Roe Bartle was a large man known as "The Chief" for his many years of leadership in the Boy Scouts. Team owner Lamar Hunt reportedly named the team the Chiefs in honor of Bartle.

Vincent Schilling, associate editor of Indian Country Today, said that doesn't make it any better. □

Wimbledon eyeing reduced-capacity crowd in June

WIMBLEDON, England (AP)

— Wimbledon organizers are planning for a reduced-capacity crowd at this year's Grand Slam tournament, though other options remain, the All England Club said Thursday. The club previously announced that the tournament, canceled in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic, would go ahead with or without fans. The three options are full capacity, reduced ca-

capacity or no fans.

"The majority of our planning focus is currently centered on the option of a reduced capacity Championships and how that would affect each stakeholder group, but we are not yet in a position to rule out any of the other scenarios," the club said in a statement.

Wimbledon, called off last year for the first time since 1945, is scheduled to run from June 28-July 11.

"While the rollout of the vaccination program in the UK is a very heartening development," the club said, "it naturally remains too soon to know how this will impact public attendance at major events in the UK."

With five months to go, "we are continuing to develop our detailed scenario planning" and working with public health authorities to stay informed about developments.

"Our approach will be to remain as agile as possible and leave enough flexibility in our planning to adapt as required to the prevailing conditions in the summer," the club said.

Britain has recorded more than 108,000 coronavirus-related deaths — highest in Europe.

Australian Open organizers say the year's first Grand Slam will start as planned next Monday. Under the current plans, up to 30,000

spectators are expected daily at Melbourne Park for the two-week event.

The U.S. Open and French Open were held last year but with strict protocols to reduce the possibility of spreading the virus. No fans were allowed at Flushing Meadows, while Roland Garros was limited to 1,000 fans per day.

The All England Club said it plans to provide "regular updates as our plans develop." □